A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

IN THE 2d CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

NEWPORT,

THE SABBATH SUCCEEDING

THE INTERMENT OF

Doctor *ISAAC SENTER*,

WHO DIED, DECEMBER 20th, M,DCC,XCIX,

ÆTAT. 45.

By WILLIAM PATTEN, A.M.
MINISTER OF SAID CHURCH.

Published at the Request of the Society.

NEWPORT: Printed by HENRY BARBER,
1800.

A Funeral Diſcourſe.

JOB xxx. 23.

FOR I KNOW THAT THOU WILT BRING ME TO DEATH, AND TO THE HOUSE APPOINTED FOR ALL LIVING.

WITH the time, or circumſtances of our removal from life, we are not acquainted; but of the ultimate certainty of the event, there is no ground to doubt.

PERSONS may conjecture that they ſhall not outlive a particular ſeaſon; or that they ſhall die by a particular diſorder, or calamity: and yet be ſupported through that ſeaſon, and ſaved from the evil they apprehended.—On the other hand to preſume on a courſe of years, imagining that we are exempt from diſeaſe, or caſualties, would not only be a ſin, but might prove an experimental miſtake. By cauſes not foreſeen, or which were not conſidered dangerous, we might be arouſed from ſecurity, and brought to the grave.

THE hour of death, like the coming of the Son of man to judgment, is known to no one; but of the certainty of death there is the fulleſt evidence from the experience of man in all ages, and the general ſtate of nature: from the indications of frailty in

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our own conſtitution, and the teſtimony of the word of GOD.

THE grave is repreſented as *the houſe appointed for* ALL *living*. The characters and conditions of mankind are exceedingly diverſified in a number of reſpects; but whatever diſtinctions may ſubſiſt between them, they are all alike in this, that they muſt die, and make their bed in the duſt. Here *the rich and poor meet together*, and the *ſervant is free from his maſter*. In this place all diſtinctions are obliterated, all relations diſſolved, all acquiſitions relinquiſhed: *Naked came* we from the earth, *and naked* do we *return thither*, Job i. 21. *All go to one place: All are of the duſt, and all return to duſt again*, Eccles. iii. 20.

IT is ſaid, "*I know, that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the houſe* APPOINTED *for all living*;" implying that it is the certain, unchanging purpoſe of GOD, that all ſhall die. Death is not an occaſional event; but is pre-determined in the plan of divine providence, is the fixed ordination of Heaven. In conformity with this, no proviſion is made in nature, by which any one can poſſibly avoid the change. Frequently when a perſon lies in death, we behold an example of the inefficacy of all created expedients to preſerve life. None of the productions of the fields could afford nouriſhment: and the powers of medicine, aided by the moſt diſcerning ſkill, and ſympathetic kindneſs, could not relieve and heal; but the appointment of GOD was carried, without interruption, into full effect.

THIS paſſage of ſcripture leads us to conſider, not only the *certainty* and *univerſality* of death, but that it

it is a diſpenſation of the divine hand, *I know that* THOU *wilt bring me to death.*—

GOD, though infinitely exalted and bleſſed, regards the ſtate of the children of men. He appointed the general frailty of their nature, and determines the order, and manner in which it ſhall be executed, exerciſing over each one a providential care. *It is not in man, who walketh, to direct his ſteps; but in the hand of* GOD *are all his ways*, Jer. x, 22. He obſerves our going out, and coming in: he is acquainted with our ſtate in proſperity and adverſity; in ſickneſs and health: in the various relations we ſuſtain—and it is not without a due conſideration of all connected circumſtances, that any change is produced, and that death is experienced.

IF perſons be brought to death, by the appointment and will of GOD, there is infinite wiſdom in the diſpenſation. To conſider any event as under his government, and yet oppoſed to infinite wiſdom, is inconſiſtent. Though death in itſelf is evil and afflictive, and a reverſion of the original order of nature; yet that it is ſubordinated to wiſe and holy purpoſes, is evident from the infinite perfection of Deity, and from the declared and known reaſons of the appointment.

THE entrance of ſin into the world rendered the ſentence of death juſt.—Wiſely to adapt the condition of mankind to a ſeaſon of trial, finally to be terminated, it was ordained that the ſyſtem of creation ſhould be frail, and with all other objects that human life ſhould be tranſitory. If we be convinced of the wiſdom of GOD in determining that the heavens ſhould wax old as a garment, and the foundations of the earth be removed, and that all

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the human race ſhould die; then we may reconcile with wiſdom his removing particular perſons from life; for in theſe inſtances he gives an example of the general ſentence, and carries it, as it reſpects the human race, into effect.

Should it be objected, that the time and circumſtances of a perſon's death appear, in ſome inſtances, to militate againſt divine wiſdom in the production of it? To this it may be replied, that what is conſidered the weakneſs and frailty of man in old age, is nothing more than the appointment *that he ſhall die*, exhibited in example. There is no neceſſity, in the conſtitution of his nature, that he ſhould become feeble at threeſcore years and ten, or that he ſhould be at all impaired by age, more than that the Sun, by continuing to ſhine, ſhould finally loſe his luſtre. Indeed, but for experience, it would be thought more ſtrange that the ſun, a vaſt body of fire, ſhould be kept burning for many thouſand years, without the leaſt apparent diminution, than that the human body ſhould be ſuſtained in vigor, forever.

If it be owing ſolely to the decree of death, that man becomes feeble and helpleſs at a certain age, then it may conſiſt with divine wiſdom, that he ſhould experience ſickneſs and death in an earlier ſeaſon. If the decree find man in vigor, though a thouſand years old—intereſted in a variety of relations, engaged in important labors, with ſcenes of enjoyment and hope around him, God alone can determine when that vigor ſhall abate, when thoſe relations ſhall be diſſolved, and thoſe proſpects cloſed. To plead the importance of relations and purſuits againſt the time of removal deſignated in Divine Providence, may ever delay the ſtroke of death, and is an implied claim to immortality on earth. If wiſdom be expreſſed

preſſed in the general ſentence of death, it is doubtleſs expreſſed in the particular time and circumſtances in which it is executed.

It may further be obſerved, that if death be the appointment of God, it is ſubſervient to infinite goodneſs.

The goodneſs of God is as unqueſtionable as his wiſdom, or power. In the permiſſion of ſin, and in all the evils which reſult from it, he was influenced by benevolence as truly as in the creation of the world. Unleſs he were, there is a contrariety in his character; or he is leſs glorious and excellent in the government of creatures than in giving them exiſtence.

It is aſſerted in ſcripture, *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*, Eccles. vii. 8.—Exiſtence is good, or evil, chiefly in reference to its objects. If God do not exerciſe goodneſs in governing, he exerciſed none in creating. Unleſs it were his object that creatures ſhould be ſubſervient to wiſe and holy purpoſes, no advantages would reſult from their exiſtence: for however curiouſly they might be formed, or liberally endowed, their end would be vain, and thus their organization and endowments would be uſeleſs.

The object of God in governing is the higheſt general good. In purſuing this he indulges no reſpect of perſons; but is impartial, juſt and uncontrolable. The condition of no one on earth, nor of any creature in the univerſe is the ſame, as if his intereſt were alone conſulted: as if it were the ſole object of God to exalt him, and promote his advantage.

CREATURES are viewed by GOD not as ſeparate individuals, but in a collective capacity, and are all ſubordinated to the greateſt good. By this the experience of each one is determined, whether proſperous, or adverſe: whether life, or death.

To chooſe the accompliſhment of this object, and voluntarily to conform to it, is a univerſal duty, and in this conſiſt the higheſt dignity, and the higheſt happineſs of which a creature is capable. In the temper here defined a perſon will be willing to live, or die, as GOD ſhall determine: he will be happy in the bleſſings with which he is favored, and content to reſign them when required in Divine Providence: he will acquieſce in the removal of his friends, in the calamities which befal the world, and in all the evils of which creatures are the ſubjects.

As the general is ſuperior to individual good, and is ever purſued by GOD, death in being inflicted by him in ſubſervience to this, is ſubſervient to good, even the higheſt of which we can conceive.

HAVING attempted to illuſtrate the text, by conſidering the certainty and univerſality of death, and that it is a diſpenſation of infinite wiſdom and benevolence, productive in every inſtance, of the greateſt good, I would conclude my diſcourſe with an

IMPROVEMENT *of the ſubject.*

1. WE may infer, that we cannot place dependance on life.

IT is not only certain that we *ſhall be brought to* DEATH, *and to the houſe appointed for* ALL *living*; but of the time, or manner of our removal, we are ignorant. Theſe will be determined, not by our con-

connections in this ſtate; but by our relation to GOD and his government. We may be ſpared for years, or may ſoon be taken. It is our duty to conſider our frailty, and not depend on life; but be devoted to the divine will.

2. WE may infer, that it is improper to place confidence in any of our acquaintance and friends.

INNUMERABLE are the teſtimonies given in Divine Providence, that the moſt intimate relations muſt be diſſolved: that perſons of ſkill and generoſity, of eminence and great uſefulneſs, muſt be removed. Of this we have witneſſed a number of inſtances: but few have been ſo impreſſive as the one which lately took place among us; by which not only a family is overwhelmed in ſorrow, but the town is ſenſible of a loſs.

HE is juſtly to be regretted, as a man ſuſtaining many important relations,* and of a great, generous, humane ſpirit. He will be lamented as a huſband, father, and benefactor: He will be regretted as at the head of a claſs of citizens, diſtinguiſhed for their exertions in the late revolutionary war, and on whom dependence is placed in the future emergencies of the country, among whom he preſided with affectionate ſolicitude and dignity. He will be deeply regretted, as eminent in the very uſeful and important profeſſion in which he was extenſively employed; and for which he was qualified, not only by the acuteneſs of his diſcernment and accuracy of his opinions—by his deciſion and judgment; but by a choice of the moſt inſtructive books, an extenſive correſpondence, and great experience.

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* *He left an affectionate wife and five children—was honorary Member of the Philadelphia and London Medical Societies, and President of the* Cincinnati, *of this State.*

THE Miniſters in general of the Town received his prompt, his vigilant, his patient attention, in the hour of affliction and diſeaſe, to themſelves and families, without any claim of compenſation :—and this tribute is doubtleſs ſmall, compared with the one due to his kindneſs and liberality in other inſtances.

SUCH was the general confidence in his ſkill, that ſome might think, under his care, they were in a peculiar degree ſecure from death. But this confidence was vain—his own life he could not prolong : and in his removal in ſo early a part of exiſtence we are taught *his* dependence, *our* dependence, and the dependence of all things on God.

3. FROM the ſubject we learn the nature of reſignation, and the reaſonableneſs of the principle.

TRUE reſignation is founded on a belief, not that man, from a neceſſity of nature, muſt die ; but that this and every change is appointed, and carried into effect by GOD : in a belief, not that our particular wiſhes and intereſts are conſulted ; but that the higheſt good is promoted.—It implies ſenſibilities correſponding to the nature of events ; but, both in what is pleaſing and in what is afflictive, that we ſubmit with chearfulneſs to the divine will.

ON this principle we may ſafely reſt all the intereſts of exiſtence, for it is the ſum of all its duties, and the temper is a foundation for the higheſt joy, and for peace in every trial and adverſity. In this temper we ſhall be ſupported in the experience of death ourſelves—ſupported in the loſs of thoſe much dearer than life. It will be the language of our hearts, *It is the Lord*, the infinitely wiſe and juſt and compaſſionate GOD, *let him do what seemeth him good.—The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord.*

A PRAYER, *suited to the preceding* SERMON.

[*Published from Recollection.*]

O LORD, who art ſelf-exiſtent, and of whoſe *years there ſhall be no end!*—We adore thee as the Creator of all things, and as exerciſing dominion over the work of thine hands.—We bleſs thee as regarding every creature, and event; and as making thy glory, and the higheſt felicity of thy works, the object of thine adminiſtration.

Enable us, with reverence, to ſubmit to thy will—to thoſe diſpenſations in which our expectations are diſappointed, as well as to thoſe in which they are accompliſhed. Impreſs us with a ſenſe of our ignorance of events, neceſſary in a government infinitely wiſe and good: and of the guilt of cenſuring thy meaſures, and oppoſing Thee.

May we ſuitably conſider, that we are *Strangers and pilgrims on earth:* that *thou wilt bring* us *to death, and to the houſe appointed for all living:* that *man, at his beſt eſtate, is altogether vanity:* that his *days are an hand's breadth*—his life, as a *tale that is told.*

May we conſider thy condeſcenſion, in regarding our ſtate:—thy care and infinite compaſſion:—and truſt thee in all ſeaſons and circumſtances:—and, though we *walk through the valley of the ſhadow of death*, may we *fear no evil.*

For life, and all worldly bleſſings, we offer thee a tribute of gratitude. We praiſe thee for the richer bleſſings of the goſpel: for the pardon of ſin, for ſpiritual

ſpiritual life, and ſupport:—that ſubmitting to thy will, and truſting in thy Son, we ſhall be ſubjects of thy love, ſhall be led from ſtrength to ſtrength, and admitted to never ending glory and happineſs.

We acknowledge, and bemoan that principle of depravity, which is productive of diſorder and miſery, and is diſpleaſing in thy ſight. May we be delivered from its influence; overcome the world and the powers of darkneſs, and be devoted ſincerely and entirely to thy ſervice—reſpecting all thy commands, and taking thy promiſes as our heritage.

Sanctify to us the diſpenſations of thy Providence: particularly the afflictive event we have been called lately to experience, and at this time to conſider. May it be rendered conducive to an impreſſion of the moſt important truths, and the exerciſe of the moſt eſſential virtues.

Look down in compaſſion on thine handmaiden, the bereaved *Conſort*. Greatly haſt thou afflicted her: her heart is broken with ſorrow. Thou alone art able to bind it up, and give her peace. Teach her to obſerve thine hand in this chaſtiſement: may ſhe realize, *tho' clouds and darkness are round about Thee*, that *juſtice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne*. May ſhe truſt in thee, and enjoy the light of thy countenance, and be bleſſed forever.

Regard in mercy the bereaved children—provide for their wants. Reward into their boſoms the liberality of thy ſervant to others.—May they be trained to uſefulneſs and honor, to virtue and piety. May they look to thee as their God and heavenly Father, and in the ſhadow of thy wings find a refuge from every evil.

Sanctify

SANCTIFY the bereavement to all the connections and acquaintance of thy ſervant. May not their eſtimate of earthly good, contradict the meaſures of thy Providence: May they, from a ſenſe of the frailty of man, and the tranſitory nature of his connections here, be led to place their affections on things above, and conſider the importance of thy friendſhip, which alone is without change.

MAY this loſs be ſanctified to the inhabitants of the town: and wilt thou, in mercy, raiſe up one, whoſe heart thou wilt endue with equal diſcretion and fortitude, and whoſe hand thou wilt guide with equal ſkill, in relieving the diſtreſſes of thy people.

LOOK in compaſſion on all who mourn. May they conſider *that thou dost not willingly afflict:*—may they truſt in thee, as the only ſource of conſolation and hope: and though *no chaſtiſement is, for the preſent joyous, but grievous; may it yield the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs.*

SMILE upon thy Churches.—May not the gates of the grave, nor of hell prevail againſt them.—May all things be over-ruled for their advantage.—May they exhibit a bright example of every Chriſtian grace, and be extended from the riſing to the ſetting ſun.

BLESS the nations of the earth.—May the diſpenſations of thy Providence be connected with the inſtructions of thy word to all people, and be attended with thy gracious influence.—May the calamities which are experienced, and the puniſhments which are to be feared, be a means of awakening the children of men to a ſenſe of the evil of ſin, and the neceſſity of obeying thy commands—and *may thy name*

be hallowed: may *thy kingdom come, and will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven,*—through Jesus Christ.—To the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all honor and praise,

AMEN.